

Alcorn State University
Literary Society Building (Belles Lettres)
~~Lorman~~ Vicinity
Claiborne County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-201

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE MISSISSIPPI	COUNTY CLAIBORNE	TOWN OR VICINITY TOWN VICINITY ALCORN
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Literary Society Building		HABS NO. MS-201
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Belles Lettres		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) Alcorn State University Campus		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) c. 1850. HABS, Historian's Work Sheet	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) Unknown	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) The last remaining lyceum on the campus, the building was originally occupied by Oakland College, the first collegiate institution in Mississippi. Its successor, Alcorn State University, was the first landgrant college for Blacks in the Nation, established in 1878.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Once a fine temple-front Greek Revival structure, the Literary Society Building retains only the outline of its original merit.		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) The load-bearing walls are of brick laid in common bond. The roof is shingled.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) The rectangular, temple-front building has a gabled roof. It has a three bay main facade and is two stories plus an attic in height.		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Three bay portico of Doric columns without bases supports a full entablature and pediment below. There is a balcony at second floor. Six plain chimneys are symmetrically placed. The four-paneled entrance door is surmounted by a large transom. Segmental arched windows are four over four.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) A central hall is flanked by six rooms. The simple stair has plain balusters and a square newel with Eastlakean carving. The floors are of wood, walls of plaster, doors are simple paneled with unmolded architraves.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES The building originally had an academic portico with four fluted columns and an entablature of triglyphs and metopes. The building was remodeled in 1890 for use as a dormitory.		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE The building is presently deteriorated. The university is seeking funds for restoration.		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE The Belles Lettres Literary Society was founded in 1836. It was one of two literary societies at Oakland College. The building is situated on a crescent shaped ridge, facing northwest.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) Cruss, Melvin Kellogg. "History of Oakland College," 1830-1871. (Unpublished MA thesis, Louisiana State Univ.) 1965. Rogers, Tommy Wayne. "Oakland College." Journal of Mississippi History. Vol. XXXVI, No. 2, May 1974. Project coordinated by MS Dept. of Archives & History.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Elbert Hilliard, Dir. Date compiled by William C. Allen, Architectural Historian. October 1974. Edited and transmitted by Marion K. Schlefer, HABS		DATE September 1984